The Consecrated Life.

W. C. Hawksley.

LIT
4600P
H747
H315

Class Lit 4600P Book H747 H315
General Theological Seminary Library
CHELSEA SQUARE, NEW YORK.

PRESENTED BY
Claudius M. Roome
G. T. S. 1893.

The Consecrated Life

The Consecrated Life

Six Sermons

together with

Meditations for

The Devotion of the Three Hours' Agony

By

William Charles Hawksley, M.A.

Vicar of All Saints', Portsea

London

Skeffington and Son, Piccadilly, W.

MDCCCXCV

GETTY LAW LIBRARY NEW YORK

54694

Lit
4600P
H747
H315

LIBRARY
NEW YORK

TO

THE PARISHIONERS

OF

ALL SAINTS', PORTSEA,

THIS LITTLE VOLUME

IS

AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

Preface.

It has been thought that the publication of the following Sermons on the Consecrated Life may accomplish some useful purpose. Prepared originally, in the ordinary course of work in an overwhelmingly large parish, for delivery *ex tempore*, they lay small claim to originality, and any justification for their publication in more complete form must consist in the hope that that idea may be realised. May it please God the Holy Ghost to use them, be it ever so slightly, for His glory to the edification of His people on our most holy Faith.

The Meditations on the Seven Words from the Cross constitute the pith of addresses delivered from notes last Good Friday at the usual "Service of the Three Hours." Originally designed with special reference to the subject of the Consecrated Life, which had formed that of a series of Sunday sermons immediately preceding, their publication in the present volume may be considered a fitting sequel to that of the sermons which they follow.

Grateful acknowledgment is made of assistance derived in the preparation of the sermons from Dr. Goulburn's invaluable treatise, "Thoughts on Personal Religion," especially

with regard to the sermon on the Dual Nature of Consecration ; and in respect to the Meditations, of some thoughts from the beautiful and touching course on the Seven Last Words, preached by Mr. Dover in Manchester nine years ago, and subsequently published by Messrs. Skeffington and Son.

A debt of gratitude is also due to the late Miss Frances Havergal for the expression of thoughts rendered possible by the use of her lines on Consecration, as well as to Miss Charlotte Murray and Mrs. Godwin respectively for their poems, *He Knoweth* and *School Life*, which are quoted at length in these pages.

Contents.

Meditations on The Seven Last Words.

		PAGE
THE FIRST WORD	The Cry of Consecration ...	... 67
THE SECOND WORD	The Repose of Consecration	... 70
THE THIRD WORD	The Companionship of Consecration	73
THE FOURTH WORD	The Cost of Consecration	... 76
THE FIFTH WORD	The Sufferings of Consecration	... 78
THE SIXTH WORD	The Encouragement of Consecration	82
THE SEVENTH WORD	The Confidence of Consecration	... 84

The Consecrated Life.

I.

THE CALL TO CONSECRATION.

1 Chronicles xxix. 5.

"Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?"

ENT is primarily a season of preparation for Easter. Easter is the Festival of the Risen Life of Christ, severed from Whom we can do nothing. It is therefore the Festival of Spiritual Existence; "because I live, ye shall live also." Hence, amongst the observances of Lent, a place may not unworthily be found for an endeavour to perfect, under the teaching of God the Holy Spirit, our individual conceptions of some aspects of the Life of Consecration, to live which is to walk in newness of life "by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

In this thought of newness of life we turn our backs upon the past. Its story is told, and the book of its records is closed. "He said unto me, it is done." We look onward to the future. Before us is spread open a new book, its blank pages yet unillumined and still

unsoiled. Present to each of us, in all the fulness of its opportunity, is the oft-desired one chance more. It is an opportunity for what? To live, and to plot, and to plan for self as in the days that are gone? To return again to the wearisome heaping together of riches, not knowing who shall gather them? Or an opportunity to begin, with higher hopes, nobler aspirations, and greater accomplishments, to be a better man? For He that sat upon the throne said also, "Behold, I make all things new." "*Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?*"

Let us take, therefore, as the subject of our meditation this Lent the consideration of the Consecrated Life, that so for ourselves its attainment may be the better realized, and that we, in the power of Christ's Resurrection, may each approximate more nearly this year "unto a full grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." To us is sounding now the preliminary cry, the call to Consecration, "Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?" But before we can utter the faithful response "Here am I; send me," each must appreciate the nature of the demand, and calculate the cost of its recognition, each must measure the limits of his powers, and finally estimate the fervency of his zeal. To accomplish this will be the object of our present meditation.

I. THE LIFE OF CONSECRATION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

S. Paul answers the question in his letter to the Romans, when, having dealt with the gifts and calling of God,

and with the depth of the riches both of His wisdom and knowledge, he adds, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." But, fully understood, is there not something almost sacramental in this teaching? As out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, and out of the heart are the issues of life, insomuch that by man's words shall he be justified, and by his words shall he be condemned: so here, what is this presentation of the body but the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual self-surrender of the entire being, all that we are and hope to be, all that we have or may possess, to Him Whose we are, and Whom we ought to serve?

In the appeal for such a presentation no limitation is suggested which could reduce it to the mere performance of what is ordinarily described as essentially "Church Work;" such a duty being necessarily implied as the less involved in the greater. Nor can it merely indicate the rightful daily performance of

"The trivial round, the common task,"

which itself is the necessary outcome of the fuller service; religion fostering the performance of duty, not usurping its place. Rather, the complete thought which seems to underlie the Apostle's words is that of a voluntary self-submission to God's will, for Him to direct and use our lives as He sees well, and of our ready acquiescence therein by making the doing of that will the supreme object of our existence.

And that is the Consecrated Life. The admission that we are slaves—"Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price"—and therefore the cheerful and absolute yielding of ourselves to our Master, our being, our capabilities, and our possessions to be His, His alone, and His alone for ever.

Let me illustrate the practical meaning of this by its application to three phases of common life.

Take, first, *political life*. What does this imply? The possession of power. It may appear infinitesimal in individual cases, but it is always there in degree, and it should accordingly be a consecrated talent to be utilized for the furtherance of the right; a force which may not be directed to the extension of "party," still less to the advancement of personal interests, but one which, constituting an element in social existence, is to be consecrated to Christ and to the attainment of His principles. The possession of the franchise must mean, for those to whom self-dedication to God is a reality, the constant inquiry, 'How would Jesus vote?'

Take, next, *the life of the home*. Upon what are its security and happiness based? Ultimately upon love. Love, therefore, is subject to the regulation of consecration. As years go on the love of the child for parent and for home finds extension. It receives fresh developments as it discovers newer objects. As two hearts are drawn together, the sublimation of love in the sacrament of matrimony enters into consideration. Then, sometimes, a revelation dawns. By the one the claims of God are definitely rejected; by the other as expressly recognized in consecration. What should follow? By the one

who admits the sovereignty of God over all existence and all possessions, the teaching of the Holy Ghost must, perforce, be accepted; "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." The words are spoken, the fiat uttered, and, though the very heartstrings break at the sacrifice of love, the sacrifice is offered on the Altar of Consecration.

Or take, finally, *the life of the individual.* Here the meaning of self-dedication is made clear by the cry

"Take my life, and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.
Take my hands, and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love.
Take my feet, and let them be
Swift and beautiful for Thee.
Take my voice, and let me sing
Always, only, for my King;
Take my lips, and let them be
Filled with messages from Thee.
Take my silver and my gold;
Not a mite would I withhold.
Take my intellect, and use
Every power as Thou shalt choose.
Take my heart, it is Thine Own;
It shall be Thy royal throne.
Take my will, and make it Thine:
It shall be no longer mine.
Take my love; my Lord, I pour
At Thy Feet its treasure-store.
Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, all for Thee."

"Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?"

II. The Life of Consecration: what will it cost?

Our Blessed Lord once asked of the multitude, "Which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost?" In like manner, they who contemplate so great a renunciation as a voluntary self-submission to God's will, do well to inquire at the outset what will be the cost of such a sacrifice; lest haply, like the builder of the parable, having laid the foundation they be not able to finish.

To simplify the inquiry we may eliminate what it will *not* cost. It will not cost the brightness and sweetness of life, for it will "add sunlight to daylight, by making the happy happier;" it will involve the loss of no single friend worth the name, but shall extend the circle of friendship, as they that fear the Lord speak often one to another, "and they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels;" nor will it deprive of any pleasure equal to that which it assures in His presence where only there is fulness of joy, and at His right hand where there are pleasures for evermore.

But it *will* cost something, and the price is a tremendous one. It is the deliberate substitution of interest in the things that are unseen and eternal for delight in the things that are seen and temporal. And this is no mere phrase. Whilst it does not imply, on the one hand, that things temporal may be ignored (their full cultivation as a means to an end being one of the duties of consecration), or, on the other hand, merely the surrender of the playtime and playthings of life,

when their use is found to interfere with purposes and projects of higher interest (for such surrender is, in the affairs even of this world, a matter of daily experience), it assuredly does involve the voluntary but full and complete surrender of anything and everything, the enjoyment of which would be inconsistent with the attainment of the supreme end in view. For the admission of the supremacy of the unseen over the seen means the sacrifice of the present to the future.

Let us candidly recognize the result of this. *Possibly* it may be estrangement and misunderstanding amongst kinsfolk and acquaintances, which are no less painful because, on the one side, unavoidable; ridicule and opposition in quarters where approval and support are most appreciated; loss of the heart's desire with regard to ambitions long fondly cherished; a smaller house, and a reduced banking account. *Certainly* it will mean an unrelaxed and unrelaxable self-discipline, with all the physical and spiritual weariness it entails; a vigorous watchfulness and a prolonged struggle, together with cessation from thoughts of self and self-gratification; and all this, coupled with the disappointments inherent in our natural weakness and lukewarmness, united, too, with those strong cryings and tears which are incidental to the suppression of tastes, habits, and wishes, themselves natural to humanity. But state it how we will, for each and for all the individual results achieved by the payment of such a price are indicated assuredly in the unequivocal words of the Christ, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."

"Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?"

III. The Life of Consecration: is it possible?

But assuming that the direction of the will in regard to Consecration of Life be right, even after the enlightenment of the understanding as to its cost, a further question arises as to its possibility. Nor is it a question to be lightly put aside. The sacrifice suggested is so real, the issues involved are so costly, that unless the proposal contain some element of possibility it were obviously worse than useless to make the effort. Let us therefore try to estimate the forces which make first against, and then in favour of, such a possibility.

First, there is the opposition to be expected from within, that is to say from ourselves. Consecration appears at first sight so to narrow the scope of life as almost, by an environment of limitations, to reimpose the touch not, taste not, handle not of a legal religion. Next, there exists, and it must be reckoned with, the opposition which is invariably directed against self-dedication by humanity in general, and by 'Society' in particular. It is the opposition of the world, and will surely come, for not yet are the kingdoms of this world the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ; and until such sovereignty be fully established the world will have no welcome for a consecration which must undermine the foundations of utter selfishness, upon which unregenerate social practice rests. Once more, it were idle to ignore the opposition to be feared from Satan. He is beyond question the strongest of the opposing forces which consecration has to dread. And

this because, since he knows the danger threatened thereby to his own designs, neither energy nor strategy at his disposal will be unused to overthrow so direct a menace to his power. Thus the force which makes against the possibility in question is that which forms the sum of these three forces acting in combination, ourselves, the world, and the devil: a force sufficiently strong to appal the stoutest heart, and, if unmet by one superior to itself making in an opposite direction, to render a negative answer the only possible reply to our enquiry.

But until the other side be heard that enquiry is not closed. What, then, are the forces that make for the possibility of consecration? Let the matter be estimated in the cold light of experience. S. Paul's life affords both an example of consecration and an illustration of the means whereby it may be attained. Of himself he declares, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him;" adding in the same Epistle, and as though in explanation of his former assertion, "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ Which strengtheneth me." It is the same Christ Whose Voice is heard asking of our consciences the question, "Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?" And in reply we ask whether it be possible!

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: *if any man hear My Voice, and open the door, I will come in to him,* and will sup with him, and he with Me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne."

"*Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?*"

IV. THE LIFE OF CONSECRATION: IS IT WORTH WHILE?

One question, and one question only, remains for consideration with regard to this call to consecration. Assuming the possibility, is a response worth while?

On the one hand, let us admit fully the difficulties in the way of self-dedication to God, and count its cost to the uttermost farthing; on the other hand, let us recognize the wisdom of the Voice that asks, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" and in the balances of such consideration solve the problem. It is the question of a soul's salvation. From that conclusion there is no escape, and moreover the soul in question is the soul of the individual *me*. Christ will have all or none. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Either the life self-dedicated for all eternity to Him and to His service Who has bought us with no less a price than the effusion of His own Blood, the life so dedicated in His Power, "severed from Whom we can do nothing"—the Consecrated Life; or else the life lived for time, in the world and for the world, by self and for self, a life

to be absorbed at last into the blackness of darkness for ever. Therein lies the choice. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked." "Wherefore give diligence to make your calling and election sure."

Approaching the great Easter Festival of the Risen Life, the Festival, that is to say, of Spiritual Existence, may it be ours, in contemplation of infinite possibilities, and therefore of untold responsibilities, in His Power, and for His dear sake, so to dedicate that existence to Him in the Consecrated Life, that in response to the echoing call, "Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?" the answer of each may be—

"Father, let me dedicate
All my life to Thee,
In whatever worldly state
Thou wilt have me be.
Not from sorrow, pain, or care
Freedom dare I claim,
This alone shall be my prayer,
Glorify Thy Name."

II.

THE DUAL NATURE OF CONSECRATION.

S. MATTHEW VI. 10.

"Thy will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven."

WE have seen that in taking as the subject of our Lenten meditation the Consecrated Life, the object to be kept in view would be the better realization of its attainment; that so this year, in the power of Christ's Resurrection, we might approximate more nearly "unto a full grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." To this end, and as a necessary preliminary to a faithful response on our part to the call to consecration, we enquired generally into the meaning of self-dedication to God. The Consecrated Life, however, though capable of expression in comparatively simple terms, is at the same time so far reaching in its effects that a more thorough investigation into its nature is essential for an intelligent and complete surrender to its demands. To afford this is, therefore, the object proposed upon the present occasion.

Accepting our former definition of consecration as a voluntary self-submission to God's will for Him to direct and use our lives as He sees well,

together with a ready acquiescence therein upon our part by making the doing of that will the supreme object of our existence, it is obvious that the clause from the Lord's Prayer, which forms a basis for our present thoughts, possesses a twofold significance. It is, in the first place, nothing less than a petition, put by our Blessed Lord into the mouths of His disciples for all time, for the attainment of the Consecrated Life: "Thy will be done." But it is at the same time far more than this, for it contains by implication an epitome of what that life should be in its full development. It is to be nothing else than the imitation on earth of the example of Heaven: "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven."

Now the heavenly conception of consecration is manifestly that supplied by the angelic life. Of the character of that life Holy Scripture affords numerous indications. For the purpose of our present investigation, however, the well-known passage recorded in the story of the vision of Isaiah is perhaps the most pregnant with instruction. The Prophet saw the seraphims, of whom "each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory." As we gaze upon those burning ones, their faces and their feet wing-covered, and they themselves "with mighty wings outspread," poised expectant, and as we listen to the words of their antiphonal cry, we recognize at once that for them the life of glad self-submission—the

Consecrated Life—possesses a dual nature. And the two elements in this complex nature are as inseparable as are those which are united by the hypostatic union in our Blessed Lord Himself. For what are they? Devotion and service. "With twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet;" there is the life of spiritual devotion. "With twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory;" there is the life of active service. The latter impossible without the former; the former unpractical without the latter. It is the revelation of the heavenly conception of the Consecrated Life, complete in its dual aspect, first as regards its inner and devotional character, and then as to its external and practical manifestation.

"*Thy will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven.*"

Let us examine this dual relation in its due order.

I. THE DEVOTIONAL NATURE OF THE CONSECRATED LIFE.

This necessarily stands first, because all true service must have its source therein. Work, toil, labour—we may know by experience the meaning of all these (and surely each expression possesses its own peculiar degree of significance), and yet remain altogether ignorant of the characteristics of the service of Heaven. Efforts, often wearisome to the limit of endurance, which find their source in personal ambition, or from the needs-be of a busy world (of which the unrest is not diminished by the pressure and competition of modern activities), are toilsome and laborious enough, but unless such work

be illumined by the benediction of responsibility to a Master from Whom it has been received, it altogether comes short of service—unless, indeed, it be the service of self. And therefore devotion, with all that is implied therein, necessarily stands first in the God-given revelation as to the dual nature of the Consecrated Life.

The life of devotion (a phrase which needs to be carefully distinguished from that of "the devoted life," since the latter is frequently misused as though synonymous with the technical term, "the religious life;" notwithstanding that it is in truth absolutely interchangeable with that of the Consecrated Life) is a life consciously lived in the constant presence of God. This is His first will for His people, "Seek ye My Face," and consecration makes its first response, "Thy Face, Lord, will I seek." This is the primal note of dedication, to look at all things in the light of God's presence, to live so near to Him as to catch the reflection of His image, that the world in which we mix may take knowlege of us, apart from conscious effort in ourselves, that we have "been with Jesus."

Nor is this too lofty a standard. It is the angelic ideal, indeed, but one, nevertheless, for human realization. It is not

> "To wind ourselves too high
> For sinful man beneath the sky;"

for as we look away from Heaven to earth, and from angels to men, we catch the revelation presented by the gracious spectacle of one Son of Man, Who attained so completely to the life of devotion, that a secondary

meaning attaches in this sense to His own words, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

And if it be asked how such a life of devotion may be reached, that is to say, how it is possible to live in the presence of God, the answer comes that God has not left Himself without witness, since the faithful use of the means of grace is effective to a perception of Himself. Now, indeed, we "see through a glass, darkly," now, indeed, we "know in part," but still, by His mercy, we *do* see and we *do* know. The means of grace: prayer, Holy Scripture, the Sacraments, what are they but effectual means for the revelation of God? Faithfully and perseveringly used, prayer assures to the inquiring soul some manifestation of "the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God;" Holy Scripture makes plain His Being and His Nature, His Mind, and His Will; whilst the Sacraments reveal, with an ever-deepening intensity, the might and the power which, inherent in Himself, are at the disposal of His people.

Thus, to those who will accept it, the life of devotion, that is to say the primary characteristic of true, spiritual existence, becomes a possibility. In very truth it is the life of Heaven, but it may be, too, the life of earth. And it is essential to the Consecrated Life, in the dual nature of which it constitutes the first element, since without it the second were impossible.

"*Thy will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven.*"

II. THE ACTIVE NATURE OF THE CONSECRATED LIFE.

As we have seen, however, the heavenly conception of

consecration possesses two aspects, those of Devotion and Service, for apart from active service a life of spiritual devotion would be but the unpractical existence of a creature "moving about in worlds not realized." Not always wrapt in silent contemplation stand the angel hosts. "They rest not day and night." S. Gabriel, S. Raphael, S. Michael, each member of the heavenly hierarchy has his work to do; and for each the moment's service, whatever it be, whether it be to minister the chalice of consolation to the Eternal Word on the eve of His redemption of a fallen world, or to direct the exploring gaze of a tired-out saint as in rapturous vision he threads the mazes of "the realms of the blest," or to act as guardian spirit to the younger brethren of his Lord, becomes, *because it is the service of his Master*, matter of all-engrossing interest, and its fulfilment the very essence of his life, as each accepts it with glad self-submission, winging his way to its performance fresh from the very presence of God.

As in Heaven so on earth. The active life of service is the correlative of the life of devotion. And as work is a necessity to the development of the fullest human existence, so, in like manner, is it an essential factor in that supreme consecration of man's being which constitutes voluntary self-submission to, and acquiescence in, the will of God.

From this it follows that for ourselves the accomplishment of that portion of God's will which He has revealed as dependent upon human agency, becomes the duty which forms that practical side of the Consecrated Life which we call active service.

Now what was the purpose of creation but the glory of God in the manifestation of His fulness by Jesus Christ? Such a consummation, however, must remain incomplete until the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ; that is to say, until His Church have attained to its full development. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me," and not until that be accomplished shall He "see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied;" for never shall there die away the last lingering echoes of the cry of the Crucified, "I thirst," until they be lost in the full proclamation of His Voice, "All souls are Mine." But, in the mysteries of the Divine providence, this complete development is made contingent upon mortal agency, and therefore in this duty of human service stands revealed the external and practical aspect of the Consecrated Life.

Clear, then, as to the nature of the service which lies before us, we ask what is the practical duty which its performance imposes upon those whose attitude of self-surrender is best expressed in the inquiry, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" And, since nothing short of the presentation to the world, of God in all the glorious fulness of His everlasting Gospel, can fulfil His great purpose for humanity, it follows that the accomplishment of anything and everything which lies within our power to attain, and which is effective to that presentation, becomes the service which forms the practical duty of consecration. It is a service, therefore, in which each consecrated life must bear its share. "If God's plan be a vast sphere filling immensity and

occupying eternity, then my work is a little section or segment of that infinite work lying over against me and bearing my name and even the date of the present year."

And if it be asked, "Who is sufficient for these things?" or objected that such a service may be within the powers of angels but not of men, the answer is ready, couched in the language of experience, and made luminous by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit Himself. "Our sufficiency is of God." Again we turn from Heaven to earth, and from angels to men, and once more we see One Who was "made a little lower than the angels" going about "doing good, for God was with Him" by the abiding presence of His Blessed Spirit. And, watching Him, we realize the certainty for ourselves, too, of the accomplishment of the service of consecration, provided only the sacrifice on our part be complete. For what is the Consecrated Life but a life "hid with Christ in God"? And "if God be for us, who can be against us?" What time we are afraid we will trust in Him. Nay, rather, we will trust and not be afraid, for "God is my strength and power: and He maketh my way perfect."

Thus in humble dependence upon Him Who, notwithstanding the weakness of human frailty, Himself "abideth faithful," we, despite our deepened sense of the significance of the call to consecration (a sense well nigh overwhelming as we realize the absorbing character of its demands), may yet take upon our lips—perchance with fuller meaning—the time-worn

words of prayer, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven."

"To view each day's work in the radiance
Shed by God's smile;
To trust, for to-morrow, His kindness,
Resting meanwhile;
To love and to do His good pleasure,
Finding it sweet;
Give joy, through a life of endeavour
Passed at His Feet."

III.

KNOWLEDGE: ITS NEED, SUPPLY, AND USE.

2 S. Peter i. 5.

"Giving all diligence, add to your faith . . . knowledge."

THE demand made with regard to the Consecrated Life is admittedly that of intelligent and complete self-surrender. If, on the one hand, the resources of its powers are to be drawn from devotion to God, and, on the other, expended in His service, it is obvious that the faith which lies at the root of devotion must rest on a stable foundation, and that the activity which is lavished upon service needs direction to prevent a waste of energy. Such an intelligent self-surrender requires knowledge; our immediate object will therefore be to indicate the means by which this requisite knowledge may, and therefore must, be acquired.

I. Knowledge is essential to the Consecrated Life.

This is an obvious deduction from our previous considerations. Without knowledge, indeed, the spiritual life could not exist, for "this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ,

Whom Thou hast sent." Not alone, however, to the existence but also to the fulness of life is knowledge requisite. A life which is not characterised by advance can never reach completeness, and where there is advance there must be growth: thus the Life of Consecration demands growth "in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Nor can that life attain its full fruition unless it be free, in peaceful contentment, to work towards its goal, forgetting the past, looking only to the future, counting "all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus" the Lord. Faith and love too, which, after the Holy Spirit, are the originating causes of consecration, require a like firm foundation; neither the one nor the other will attain its possible strength except in his case who knows in Whom he has believed, and is persuaded that He is able to keep that which has been committed unto Him against that day. And since the activities which form so large an element in the Consecrated Life are beset with such difficulties that they would oftentimes become paralysed were it not for the inspirations of hope (than which there are few influences more potent over human nature), the cultivation of hope is necessary to their operation. But hope too needs a solid basis upon which to rest; otherwise there is no distinction between its invigorating influence and the enervating day-dreams of castle-building. It is only for the accomplishment of that which he has learnt to be possible that man will spend his strength, and if hope be to animate him amidst all the darkness of uncertainty it must be hope grounded upon the con-

viction of its ultimate accomplishment in the realisation of the

> "one far-off divine event,
> To which the whole creation moves."

What then is the knowledge demanded as a necessity for Consecration? It is the knowledge of God; of Him upon Whose Life our own is dependent and to Whose service it should be dedicated. For devotion there is needed a knowledge of the Divine Being and His Attributes; for service a knowledge of His attitude to, and requirements of, the world of men.

"*Giving all diligence, add to your faith . . . knowledge.*"

II. SUCH KNOWLEDGE IS ATTAINABLE.

Not for us is the cry admissible, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it." If to Zophar the Naamathite, inquiring with a cynicism which thought to preclude the possibility of reply, "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as Heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?" the patient answer was forthcoming from Job, who had found in Nature "the Vicar of the Almightie Lord," "Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee," how much more from us, the heirs of all the ages? For God has not left Himself without witness, but rather, by a threefold revelation in Nature, Holy Scripture and Humanity, has accorded to the man whose eyes are opened visions of Himself and of His will.

The study of this revelation therefore becomes a duty of the Consecrated Life.

Of His Manifestation in Nature we do not now speak. The subject is a vast one and perhaps better suited to the disquisitions of the scientist than of the preacher. But this much must at any rate be recognized, that never can its scientific study lead to anything but the truthful appreciation of God, since between true science which is knowledge, and God Who is fact there can be no antagonism. Scientific study has no terror for the consecrated intellect whereof the one desire is to know Him Who is the Truth. To the soul, struggling through Nature to Christ,

> "All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
> Whose body Nature is and God the Soul."

We will rather direct our attention to those departments of knowledge which are to be acquired by the investigation of the more obvious, if not less complex, aspects of revelation which remain; seeking how to learn of God and God's will through the media of His written word and Humanity.

"*Giving all diligence, add to your faith . . . knowledge.*"

III. THE INDICATION OF CERTAIN LINES OF STUDY.

To consider certain paths which should be followed for the necessary acquirement of knowledge with regard to the twofold revelation to which we have already referred, will therefore engage us for the remainder of our present meditation.

(i.) *The revelation of Holy Scripture.* It is quite impossible to express in words the priceless value of the Bible,

of which the several books are in very truth the "oracles of God." It is indeed one volume of God's great lesson book, and cannot hold too high a place in the estimation of those who seek the knowledge of God that they may abide in His presence.

But at the same time, whilst it is quite impossible to form too high an estimate of the value of Holy Scripture as a revelation of God, it is, nevertheless, as common as it is possible to entertain an utterly mistaken conception of the position which the Bible occupies. The real seeker after truth will recognise this and will be careful lest, in assigning to the holy book a definite pre-eminence far above all other literature, he so regard it as, by attempting to treat it as the foundation of Christianity, to substitute it for Him to Whom it points and to wrest from the Church, to which we owe it, her prerogative as the sacred depository of the Faith. Safe guarded against this danger he may resort to it as a lamp unto his feet and a light unto his path, strong in the conviction of the inspiration of its contents, an inspiration vouched for, either by the *imprimatur* of Christ Himself with regard to Old Testament writings, or by the Divine guidance assured to His Apostles in respect to those of the New Testament.

As, however, the study of Holy Scripture is the study of a library—a "Divine library" indeed, but a library still, the labours of various minds working under vastly different circumstances and for the presentation of often widely varying aspects of truth—so its pursuit must be directed to the attainment of differing forms of knowledge. In that older and greater part which mainly

forms the history of a particular nation, there will be discovered a portraiture of God's dealings with, and expectations from, humanity, which, revealing Him as Creator, King, Shepherd and future Saviour, manifests also the present attitude of the mind and will of Him Who changeth not, towards the world of men and things similarly circumstanced to-day. Thus the Old Testament becomes a revelation as to the nature of the duty of service. And in the writings of the newer dispensation there will be found a manifestation of the closer and more extended character of the Divine dealings through the Church, which, exhibiting "Emmanuel, God with us," and "the Comforter, Which is the Holy Ghost," indicates also the climax of devotion at the final consummation of God's promised restitution of all things.

Thus it is clear that the study of this revelation becomes a duty, the performance of which is essential to the acquirement of the knowledge demanded for an intelligent self-surrender to the devotion and service of God. Nor would the briefest consideration of this duty be complete without some recognition of a danger which besets the efforts of those who seek its faithful performance. This may be described as the danger of misapplication. Whilst no Scripture is of private interpretation, neither is all Scripture, on the one hand, universally applicable to individual cases, nor, on the other, equally indispensable for instruction in righteousness. The common practice of the selection of special verses, apart from considerations of their original or ultimate purpose, for the object of personal consolation is as unscientific (and therefore as untrue), as, in the

long run it is hurtful. For example; to deduce from the words of the Apostolic commission, recorded in S. Matthew xxviii. 20, the assurance that Christ will never forsake the individual disciple, is no less to detract from the significance of the promise, quoted in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," than it is to defraud the Church of the blessing of her Lord's special promise to His Priesthood of His perpetual Presence. So also to attach no more importance to the Holy Gospel according to S. John, than to the Book of Leviticus, or to treat as upon the same plane the Proverbs of Solomon and the Sermon on the Mount is to be blind alike to the meaning of progressive inspiration and to the revelation of the Incarnation. Or again, without diligent inquiry as to the circumstances which animated and the objects which prompted the various writers of the Holy Scriptures, their true teaching is frequently obscured and their full meaning lost. What can be more idle than the merely perfunctory reading of Zechariah's vision of the man with a measuring line in his hand, or what more full of devotional strength than the enlightened conception of its prophecy of the presence of God raised up out of the habitation of His Holiness? What more unsatisfactory than any detached application of certain passages in S. John vi., of which the complete significance can only be obtained by a comprehensive study of its harmonious whole?

True it is that the pursuit of Biblical knowledge in such a manner as we have indicated may result in the surrender of favourite theories; but the loss is gain if

those theories be false: whereas the fact that such study must assure a deepening of that knowledge of truth, and therefore of God, which is essential to full consecration, marks it out as no insignificant duty of the Consecrated Life.

"*Giving all diligence, add to your faith . . . knowledge.*"

(ii.) *The revelation of Humanity.* Important though the study of Holy Scripture be to the knowledge of God and His will, its lessons neither should nor can be the sole object of the investigations of an intelligent consecration. God reveals Himself also through all humanity—a fact which elevates the history of man into the position of a second volume in His great lesson book. The student of God will therefore never rest satisfied until he have discovered the secrets which lie hidden in the mines of national, ecclesiastical, and individual experience.

The study of the first two of these is so evidently necessary for a knowledge of the Divine dealings that we need scarcely pause to insist upon it. Indeed the manifestation of God is writ so large upon the history of nations that, with the advance of education, it can hardly be missed by him who possesses any desire to know; though it were well to point out that, to the past neglect of the careful study of the same subject in its ecclesiastical branch, is due much of the dissension which to-day mars the fair beauty of Christ's seamless robe. To know the life story of the Bride of Christ is to know much of God which nothing else can teach, and to be ignorant of her sufferings and her warfare, her accomplishments and her failures, is to be blind to

revelations of power and of longsuffering which none but God can vouchsafe. But not to linger over these, because so obviously the duty of students of God in humanity as elsewhere, we pass on to insist upon the importance to consecration of an acquaintance with individual experience as it is shadowed forth in biographical, fictional, or poetical literature.

What is biography but the record of the life struggles, the successes and the failures of men influenced, in greater or less degree, by the impress of Him Who "maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust"? Where else can we so well learn the how and the why and the wherefore of life's mysteries, or catch more clearly the indication of the Father's mind and will? As the student ponders the history of such worthies as Savonarola and Charles Kingsley, John Hampden and William Wilberforce, S. Theresa and Elizabeth Fry, his mind expands beneath the realisation of the wonders of God's workings and consecration takes a deeper root. He feels that he is the richer by a fuller knowledge of God, and he is conscious that

> "The feather, whence the pen
> Was shaped that traced the lives of these good men,
> Dropped from an Angel's wing."

Or again; the perusal of fiction is, in this connection, assuredly a means to a definite end. Not to speak here of its lighter function of recreating, and thereby energising, lives of the highest consecration, fiction possesses a distinctly educational power, as it not only illustrates the episodes of current life, but also with-

draws the veil which often hides the workings of the soul, tremulously joyful in the sunshine of God, or impotently writhing in the agony of kicking against the pricks. Who can read George Eliot's wonderful romance without finding in *Romola* the stern struggles of a noble soul battling with the opposition of circumstances? Or Shorthouse's *John Inglesant*, and not be conscious of the power of devotion to a great ideal? Or Mrs. Gaskell's *Mary Barton*, without perceiving the force of active service? And, not to multiply instances, who is there that has studied the better sort of fictional literature of the last hundred years, with fair and candid mind, coupled with an honest desire to learn, who has not risen from his books with a deeper appreciation of the influence of environment upon life, to understand which is also the better to understand God, as it illumines with fresh light the inspiration of long ago that "as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even for ever"?

Once more. What is the gift of poesy unless it be a talent, God-bestowed upon the few in order to the better revelation of His truth in the heart of the many by the expression of noble thoughts in noble words, whose

> "echoes roll from soul to soul,
> And grow for ever and for ever"?

And since this be so, men shall study the poems of the ages, in their rudest form or in their most polished verse, and, if but the spirit of knowledge be with them, their souls shall burn within as new conceptions of truth stand one by one revealed; conceptions which

raise the standard of their ideals, not only of the splendour of the Eternal and the magnificence of His will, but also of the wondrous powers latent in the Consecrated Life. Thus, gradually growing to see Him as He is, they become also gradually conformed to His Image, learning both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

And so we reach our conclusion. As knowledge is essential to the Consecrated Life and, being essential, is attainable by those who seek it, its acquirement and use stand in the forefront of the duties of consecration. To know God, that I may adore Him; to know His will, that I may serve Him;—this is the highest aspiration of the human heart. To learn of Him, that I may know Him;—this is the noblest use of the human intellect. And as "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above," so, in the investigations of their revelations, must be sought the manifestation of God. And he that seeketh findeth.

"*Giving all diligence, add to your faith . . . knowledge.*"

"We trust it comes from Thee,
A beam in darkness: let it grow.

Let knowledge grow from more to more,
But more of reverence in us dwell;
That mind and soul, according well,
May make one music as before,

But vaster."

IV.

ALTRUISM.

Acts x. 38.

"Who went about doing good, . . . for God was with Him."

IT has been recognized that the Consecrated Life possesses a dual nature. As such its responsibilities are twofold. There is, first, what we may venture to call the responsibility of selfishness. This is by no means to be relegated to the category of sinful selfishness, there being a selfishness which is within the Covenant. It is the responsibility for the preservation, so far as in us lies, of the inner or devotional life which we have seen to be essential to consecration: a responsibility met, in part, by the pursuit of knowledge, the duty of which has already been indicated. But the external or practical manifestation of consecration consists in work raised to the dignity of service. And since such a service is the accomplishment of that portion of the Divine will which (revealed by God to be dependent upon human agency) consists in the full development of His Church by means of the accomplishment of anything and everything which can effect the presentation of God to the world in all the glorious fulness of the

everlasting Gospel, so it follows that side by side with the religious responsibility of selfishness stands the religious responsibility of living and acting for the interests of others. And that is the responsibility of Altruism. It is the consideration of this feature of the Consecrated Life which should engage our present attention.

Now the one perfect example of human consecration is, of course, our Blessed Lord Himself. As in death, so in life: He "suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps." As that example is complete in regard to devotion, so is it absolute in the matter of service.

In Him the essence of consecration was fully developed; in Him, too, its active duties were entirely fulfilled. And the one because of the other. No one can follow the story of His Human Life from the declaration of its original purpose, "Lo, I come to do Thy will," to the prophecy of the attainment of that purpose, when "the Bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with Him to the marriage: and the door was shut," without perceiving that in Him altruism was very strongly marked. The activities of consecration received their due attention, as the duties of devotion were fully performed. The former impossible without the latter, and the latter unpractical without the former; in Him the one balanced the other, "Who went about doing good, . . . for God was with Him."

I. RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARDS THE WORLD AT LARGE.

The duty here receives its full illustration from the attitude assumed by our Blessed Lord towards those

without. This is depicted for us in His treatment of the woman of Canaan, who, though not of "the lost sheep of the house of Israel," yet received from the Messiah the benefit for which she craved, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." It is the adoption of the noble sentiment of heathenism,

"Homo sum: humani nihil a me alienum puto,"

sanctified and glorified by God's revelation of Himself through humanity. If love to God occupy the first place in the law of the regeneration, the second must needs be like unto it, thy neighbour being, in some sort, the manifestation of his Creator. And he who has learnt from his Master some power of Divine perception can never be altogether blinded by the splendour of the Vision of God to the real, though it be, alas, the ruined beauty of His noblest creation—the capabilities of humanity.

With reference to this subject a guiding principle is indicated for us in the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father Which is in Heaven." What is this but the service of wholesome example? The radiation of the reflected light of the Consecrated Life is to be so secured against all obstruction that, unobscured, it may shine to and through the dark places of the earth, being everywhere flashed onwards until the whole world be illumined by the brightness of the Sun of Righteousness, and glow under the warmth of His soft beams "to the glory of God the Father."

Nor is this a passive service: the full power of the Light of the World is manifested only in the intensity of its activity. Personal holiness is only fully perceived when positive goodness adds its lustre to negative sinlessness. Thus for service to the world at large the responsibility of conduct is a first consideration. For the right conduct of the religious man is a high recommendation of the virtue of religion. Truth and generosity, purity and temperance, meekness and humility, these and such as these—morality in its truest sense, because obedience to the eternal principles of right—being exemplified in the Consecrated Life, will go far to present Christ to the world, Who being the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His Person, shall by that very presentation attract all men unto Him.

To the Christian it cannot be that

> "Greatness and goodness are not means, but ends,

for "none of us liveth to himself." Thus the full object of accomplished consecration, "Holiness unto the Lord," neither is, nor can be, attained without its use as a means for the furtherance of the Divine will in the presentation of God's Gospel to the world.

And so it follows that the primary duty of altruism is the simple manifestation of morality (which, if not in itself spirituality, is one of its first-fruits), in imitation of Him "*Who went about doing good, . . . for God was with Him.*"

II. Responsibilities towards the Kingdom of God.

We pass on to speak of the duty of altruism as owing to the body of Christians at large; that is to say, to all those who, by the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, have been admitted into the Kingdom of God, which is His Church. It is a duty which in turn finds its example in the attitude of our Blessed Lord towards those who, by the covenant of the old dispensation, constituted the Jewish Church, as distinguished from that which He assumed towards the body of His disciples.

And this duty forms a parallel to that indicated in our consideration of the responsibilities of altruism towards the world at large. As those rested upon the recognition of God's revelation of Himself in humanity, so these are based upon the essential union which the laver of regeneration effects between Christ and the soul which, through its instrumentality, is plunged as

> "by a second birth
> Into the depths of God."

For the Church is the Body of Christ, and, through the sacramental extension of the Incarnation, individuals become "partakers of the Divine Nature," as they are raised by membership of the Church into membership of Christ Himself.

Nor is it difficult to find a guiding principle by which to regulate the performance of the duty in question. It is supplied by our Lord's own words, in His great parable of the Final Judgment, where the requirements of Christian altruism in this regard are summed up in the unanswerable dicta, "Inasmuch as ye have done it

unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me," "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me." The duty here implied is too obvious to be missed. It is that service towards those who form the Church of Christ is to be precisely what, under like circumstances, we should be eager to render to Christ Himself,—the whole parable dealing with practice, and showing, in a word, the high duty of Christian sympathy between those who, by the mysterious operation of the Holy Spirit, have become bone of His Bone and flesh of His Flesh.

That some have not grown unto completeness in Him, or that others, to the common hurt, have separated themselves from the communion of their brethren, need not surprise us; there were always some ready to go away. Nor can it ever release us from the obligations of altruism, since, to all eternity, nothing can erase the character imprinted upon souls once united to Christ in Holy Baptism, any more than a light regard of the sin of schism can be induced by any consideration of its real impracticability. Rather the fact that, under all circumstances, admitted or unadmitted, these souls are united to Christ, and, through the Head, to all the members, should prompt the loving sympathy which, treating them as diseased or maimed, would seek to assure their restoration in the spirit of the Apostle's counsel to the Galatians, "If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

Towards all the citizens of the Kingdom, in whatsoever degree, be it greater or less, they perceive and use

their privileges, practical sympathy is the duty of altruism. And to minister to their needs, to minimise their sufferings, to cheer their loneliness, is to afford expression to such sympathy. This may be called Christian benevolence: it is none the less Christian duty; for the sympathy of God is an integral part of the message of His everlasting Gospel, the presentation of which constitutes the action of human agency necessary to the fulfilment of Divine purpose.

And thus it follows that the simple manifestation of a strong, loving, practical sympathy towards all who name the Name of Christ, which, again, if not spirituality, is one of its first-fruits, is a further duty of altruism, incumbent upon all those whose lives are consecrated to Him and to His service, "*Who went about doing good, . . . for God was with Him.*"

"O what a close communion-bond
Of fellowship most full and fond
Christ's mystic Body doth entwine,
Together knit with cords divine,
One life electric thro' them all,
On to the Judgment from the Fall

One family in Heav'n and earth,
Bound by the ties of second birth;
None dead, tho' some their work have done,
Their battle fought, their freedom won;
All in the Lord alive and bless'd,
Tho' some may toil, and some may rest."

III. RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARDS THE FAITHFUL.

It is sad enough, but true as sad, that the implied distinction should exist. But so long as, amongst

Christians, nonconformity to "the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints," finds place at all—by whatever name it may be called, or by whatever specious excuses explained (for its justification is impossible)—so long, too, will there be warrant for a difference between the treatment of those who are verily of the "household of faith," and those who have removed from Him that called them into the grace of Christ, attracted by the seductions of a "different Gospel which is not another Gospel."

And, after all, it is but a repetition of history; for who that seeks in all things the guidance of his Lord's example can fail to notice the difference of regard which He bestowed upon the great body of His professed disciples in general and upon the inner circle of the twelve in particular? Herein is afforded the highest authority for that corresponding difference in the duties of modern altruism upon which we now insist.

The guiding principle for the action of consecration here would seem to be that enunciated by S. Paul when, in his Epistle to the Galatians, he urges, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith," or in his exhortation to the Corinthians, that the spiritual gifts after which they hankered should tend to their excellence in the edification of the Church. What is this but the consolation in Christ, the comfort of love, the fellowship of the Spirit, whereby all having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind, every man looks not on his own things, "but every man also on the things of others"? There is but "one Lord,

one faith, one baptism, one God and Father," and "all ye are brethren." Towards all the brethren, therefore, the duty of love stands paramount;—a love which is without dissimulation, and which is expressed by the effort to put ourselves in the place of others, by excusing their shortcomings, by recognizing their claims, by aiding and abetting their schemes, and by holding up their hands in all good work.

Oh, if but this duty were performed more thoroughly how infinitely stronger would be the Church of God to-day; how immeasurably nearer the overthrow of the power of Satan; how inexpressibly brighter the outlook for humanity; how wondrously increased the satisfaction of Christ.

It sounds like the achievement of a golden age; but it is one the attainment of which, dependent on the unity of the Church, is to be reached alone through the performance of this supreme duty of altruism—a duty inherent in the consecration of those who know that they have "passed from death unto life," because they love the brethren.

Whatever may be said of morality or of sympathy, of the spirituality of love there can be no question, for "God is love," and love is God; and its manifestation in the Church to-day will be seen to be as effective as it was in days gone by in the case of Him "*Who went about doing good, . . . for God was with Him.*"

Here, then, in this trinity of altruism, stand revealed the responsibilities of service in the Consecrated Life. Morality, sympathy, love: such is the revelation of the service of consecration, originally afforded by the Master,

now demanded from the servant. How did He attain to its accomplishment? S. Peter's words solve the problem, "Who went about doing good, . . . for God was with Him." Yes; "for God was with Him," and "God is love." Love is the secret of it all. We revert to our starting point, and we find the same thing—the Consecrated Life with its dual nature, the external service impossible without the inner strength. But for us, too, it is true, "with us is the Lord our God;" and our confidence in that Presence is dependent on no mere assertion, however inspired, nor even on the apparent progress of our spiritual growth; it rests upon testimony as incontrovertible as it is unexplainable, the evidence of the heart which He has made His dwelling-place. Then what must the end be? Bearing that Presence with us, and by virtue of its power in the Consecrated Life, it must be ours to manifest its strength in Christian altruism: ours by the very force of character to help men to find the true dignity of humanity; ours by the sympathy of Christ to win for the Kingdom of God which is amongst us a very foretaste of the excellency of the Kingdom of God eternal in the heavens; ours by the energy of a love which flows from membership with Christ and with each other to reanimate the communion of the Faithful—His Body, the Holy Catholic Church—with a strength which shall be resistless in its might, "the power of an endless life."

V.

RECREATION.

S. Luke ii. 49.

"Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?"

THERE are in Nature two great principles, which, although apparently opposed, do, nevertheless, in complete harmony constitute an essential characteristic of life. For the restfulness of the perfect character is the result of the aspiration after perfection conjoined to the longing for repose both of which, in degree, are common to humanity.

Enunciated in the language of physical science this postulates health as the product of the combined actions of waste and repair. Stated in terms applicable to the sphere of morals the same truth appears in the dictum which claims for effective existence the constituent elements of labour and refreshment, of work and play. Finally, translated into the language of spiritual things, with which we are alone at present concerned, it reveals the fact that duty and recreation are necessary factors in the full development of the Consecrated Life.

Of duty we have already spoken, whether in the pursuit of knowledge, which is essential to the main-

tenance of devotion, or as the religious altruism without which active service cannot be rendered. It remains to deal with recreation as an important element in the accomplishment of the objects, and therefore of the purposes, of duty. The consideration of this matter will accordingly form the subject of our present meditation. And it is no trifling subject; for if recreation form an integral part of human life it follows that it cannot but be affected by the consecration of that life to Him and to His service, Whose sustaining resolve to do the will of Him that sent Him and "to finish His work" found expression at the very outset of His life—"Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?"

The apprehension of this subject may be rendered clearer by a somewhat close examination of the analogy suggested by that phase of our initial postulate, which, dealing with physical science, affirms health to be the combined actions of waste and repair. Two processes go on in the human body. These are the taking in and the giving out of energy. These two processes go hand in hand, and in virtue thereof we have the phenomena of life itself. As there is in the human organism a continual wear and tear, so this continual wear and tear always requires repair. And repair is accomplished by means of the food which we assimilate and the repose which we enjoy. Such repair constitutes the recreation of energy.

Now this natural law finds its parallel in the spiritual world. The performance of duty, both in devotion and action, involves a definite wear and tear which calls for

recreation if the Consecrated Life be to be maintained. Such recreation therefore becomes, in its turn, a duty. It is a duty which rests upon the assured premise that its performance is essential to the development and progress of the spiritual life and that its accomplishment renders more efficient the instruments of the Divine will. This indeed is, and can be, its one and only purpose; for as the noblest ideal of humanity is the fullest service of God, so it follows that the only recreation permissible is that which tends to the better accomplishment of future service; and thus its pursuit becomes subject to those regulating laws of method by which all things human are to be brought into the obedience of Christ.

I. THE CHARACTER OF LEGITIMATE RECREATION.

As we endeavour to ascertain this it will be helpful to us to keep in view two necessary considerations. In the first place, we must remember that our enquiry is one with regard to principles. Otherwise we shall, amidst the multitude of theories as to details, be storm-tossed on the sea of human opinion when we might be firmly planted on the rock of truth. And secondly, we must submit to the instruction of the conscience. Else, amidst the shifting sands of a restless uncertainty, begotten of

> "Those obstinate questionings
> Of sense and outward things,
> Fallings from us, vanishings,"

shall we miss the deep calm anchorage of a sanctified common-sense.

Remembering the dual nature of the duties of the

Consecrated Life, we shall recognize at once that the characteristics of legitimate recreation will be twofold also. There will be that which is required to repair the wear and tear of its devotional side, as well as that which is needful for the reparation of the powers of active service.

(i.) *Devotional recreation.* When a huntsman asked S. John how such a man as he could spend time in amusing himself with a tame partridge, the Evangelist explained that, as no bow could retain its spring if always bent, so he sought in a little remission of close spiritual attention the means for the more fervent future contemplation of God. One point of the story is not to be missed. It is that in Nature is to be found one remedy for enervation of spirit. Nor, in its search, is time misspent, for in perusing Nature we are reading God;

> "One impulse from a vernal wood
> May teach you more of man,
> Of moral evil and of good,
> Than all the sages can."

Is the life of the soul becoming languid under the stress and strain of devotional exercises? Is the perception of the Father's Face growing dim as an enfeebled faith obscures His Image? Or is His Presence less apparent as an enervated spirituality paralyses our use of the means of grace?

> "Come forth into the light of things,
> Let Nature be your teacher."

"Consider the lilies of the field," said the Master—and there is philosophy in His words. It is as though He

taught that in turning from God to His handiwork should be found recreation for the wear and tear of spiritual existence, as Nature rekindled devotion at her lamp. "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"

"The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills and the plains—
Are not these, O Soul, the Vision of Him Who reigns?

Speak to Him thou for He hears, and Spirit with Spirit can meet—
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet."

And a precisely similar argument applies to the study of art in its broadest sense. For, if the function of art be the presentation of truth, acquaintance with its revelation is the knowledge of God. Is the pressure of environment at times so crushing that spiritual strength, wherewith to scale the heights whence may be seen the very Face of God, seems gone? Are its outcries so blatant as to absorb the efforts which should be directed to catch the echoes of His Voice? The province of art is to repair the worn out powers. Through art

"The weary have life, and the hungry have bliss;
The mourner is cheer'd and the anxious have rest;
And the guilt-burthen'd soul is no longer oppress'd."

It is no fanciful conception which finds in music "so mighty, so pure, so clear," the chariot to bear heavenward the aspirations of the soul, or the voice to whisper

to the stunned the message of God. Neither is it anthropomorphism that prompts the adoration of him who, whatever his surroundings, finds himself impelled to worship by the presence of stately marbles or noble paintings.

With the necessity for the study of literature we have already dealt at some length on a former occasion; in the present connection, therefore, it will be sufficient to emphasise the fact that in this department of art are to be discovered such manifestations of the secret and loving workings of Providence, such stimulants to conscience and such quickening impulses to love as may well render its pursuit spiritual recreation. And this in the highest sense, even beyond that which it affords by the simple power of amusement when, freeing the soul from the harassments of environment, it freshens the spirit for the contemplation of God.

But as the demands of the Consecrated Life ever entail the application of principles to practice, so it follows that he who realises the truth of these principles of spiritual recreation, will realise too the duties they impose. To him the laboratory and the museum, the picture gallery and the library will become as holy ground—spots and places where man by searching may find out God, spots and places therefore where he may repair the wear and tear of his devotional life, spots and places where in moments of recreation the concentration of the soul on matters external to itself will be justified in the very spirit of the utterance of Christ Himself, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?"

(ii.) *Active recreation.* There remains, however, to be considered the requirements of recreation with regard to the wear and tear which the Consecrated Life undergoes in active service. Here, even more jealously than in regard to devotional recreation, must be guarded the fundamental principle that the only legitimate recreation is that which enables the better accomplishment of future service. And for this reason; that the form which this department of recreation must take is, in itself, so attractive to humanity's natural love of ease, that, unless rigorously kept in check, its pursuit may usurp the place of the duty the performance of which it was intended to foster. The recreation needed for the active service of consecration is necessarily whatever is required in order to preserve a sound mind in a sound body. As on the one hand the vigour of the intellect must be sustained by periods of occasional repose, so, on the other, physical nature, if it be to accomplish its share of the service of consecration, demands intervals in work when it may obtain, both by exercise and rest, the reparation of wear and tear which alone will maintain its efficiency.

And these considerations are by no means beneath the dignity or beyond the scope of our main subject—the Consecrated Life. Body and soul have alike been redeemed by the precious Blood of Christ; the body, no less than the soul, has been glorified by the mystery of the Incarnation; whilst in the body of the Christian is found the very temple of God. "Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man

destroyeth the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." Thus he who fails to conserve, so far as in him lies, the powers and forces of his intellectual and physical being, not only comes short in the performance of positive duty, but also falls into actual sin. Well might the Church find in "temperance, soberness, and chastity" of the body a duty akin to the love of God demanded of the soul; and ill will it fare with his dedication of himself to his Lord and to His service who fails in the parallel duty of intellectual and physical recreation.

When, from their mission, the Apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus to tell Him "all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught," their Master's first words in reply struck the keynote of the principle which should govern action here, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while." Thus on His showing, Who "needed not that any should testify of man: for He knew what was in man," holidays, where they may be had, stand revealed as a duty. Not less will they be holy-days, if we who take them be true to our principles, and use them aright. Used they must be, not idled; passed either in that variety of work which brings rest with it, or in that actual repose which is recuperative of worn-out powers. To the disciple, who is also the soldier, of Christ holidays will be no time when he is "off duty;" they will rather be seasons when he obeys his great Captain's word of command to "stand at ease," in order that he may the better spring up with renewed vigour when the charge

is sounded. To him, therefore, the practical adaptation of his principles becomes duty. And as he climbs to the top of some snow-capped mountain, or reclines within sight of "the many-twinkling smile of ocean" he will realise the sanctity of rest, and thankfully utilise the means of recreation.

It is no answer to this to assert either that in these busy days of the world's turmoil time cannot be afforded for the purpose, or that in the ceaseless competitions of life money cannot be expended upon such an object. The fresh air of God's heaven is yet free to all, and if in any case, through life's hard pressure, its enjoyment be impossible, brotherly altruism should soon remove that impossibility. The moral law of God, whilst devoid indeed of all trace of Sabbatarianism, over-rides every consideration of expediency as, founded on those eternal principles of right—which, even though conceptions of Christianity be neglected, man can only disregard at his peril—it proclaims a weekly holiday to be had by all whose great desire is to emulate the rule of Him Who asked, "*Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?*"

II. THE DANGERS OF RECREATION.

That these exist no one who has sought to perform its duties can deny. The ill-instructed cry that the pursuit of recreation tends to worldliness may indeed be disregarded: though its abuse be forbidden the world must be used. Nor, in the Consecrated Life, can that use form any barrier to sanctity. If S. Paul could assure the Corinthians that "the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are

yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's;" if he could be "persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord," then he who seeks to follow out to its just conclusions the same Apostle's exhortation to consecration need fear neither contamination nor degeneration in the process. Nevertheless there are three dangers against which it behoves the individual to guard, and without reference to which our consideration of this subject would be incomplete.

(i.) *Loss of the sense of proportion.* Though work and recreation be alike sacred, the sacredness of the former is inherent, whilst that of the latter is relative, and exists only so far as recreation is a means to an end. Unless this be clearly perceived the sense of proportion, which is essential to the correct adjustment of sometimes conflicting duties, will be lost. If the maxim be true that man lives not to eat but eats to live, so must care be taken that the claims of recreation be regulated by the recognition of its principle. The scales of the balance must hang true, and he who would arrive at a faithful result must beware lest he forget the operation of the laws of density.

(ii.) *Forgetfulness of the body corporate.* The whole aim of consecration being the full accomplishment of the Divine will, care must be taken that the service of each life so harmonise with that of others in the body

corporate that increase is secured for the aggregate service. Unless this consideration find a place amongst the regulations of recreation it will often happen that, in the effort to repair the wear and tear incident to individual service, courses will unintentionally be followed which, in their adoption, may become injurious to others, and so ultimately rather diminish than extend the gross result. In the great army of the Church of God each legionary must realise that one great secret of his invincibility is the mutual strength of all, "for none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself."

(iii.) *Propensity to judge the conduct of others.* There are few directions in which the tendency to pass judgment on the doing of others finds greater expression than in that with respect to the recreation which they seek. Yet as surely as mankind is cast in no common mould, so surely, too, will the tastes, and habits, and needs of individuals vary as their constitutions and their opportunities. In this regard, as in so many others, the aphorism holds good that what is food for one may be poison to another. Until, therefore, the varying effects of diverse forms of recreation upon the repair of wear and tear in different constitutions and circumstances can be accurately gauged, the power to form a corresponding judgment as to their merit is absolutely wanting. "One believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another

man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth."

> "Judge not; the workings of his brain
> And of his heart thou canst not see."

"Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind;" whilst, if personal justification be demanded for individual action, the answer of the Christ remains as unanswerable still as in days gone by, "*Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?*"

And recreation taken thus, within the broad lines of definite principle, and under the direction of an instructed conscience, will assuredly perform its allotted function. Under its benign influence shall the wear and tear of the Consecrated Life be repaired, and he who seeks to live that life be enabled to go forth afresh, strong in God's gift of renovated powers to the accomplishment of his Father's business.

VI.

DIFFICULTIES AND SUPPORTS.

Isaiah xxx. 15.

"In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength."

"REMEMBERING always, that Baptism doth represent unto us our profession; which is, to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto Him," there will be no hesitation in recognising the fact that hindrances and opposition will beset our imitation of that sublime Example, through the trials that commonly attend the path of His followers. On the other hand, bearing in mind that "there hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man," and that "God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it," it will be manifest that though "the mystery of iniquity doth already work" the hindrance of him "who now letteth" cannot finally impede to the overthrow of the Consecrated Life.

The Consecrated Life is not natural to humanity, inasmuch as its main principle consists in surrender of the will; whereas, in unregenerate man, self-will holds paramount sway, disobedience—its outward expression—being the

essence of the fall. Rather it is only possible as a result of the New Birth which, as effecting an union between God and man, is a supernatural matter and generates a supernatural life. But withal it is a supernatural life passed in a natural environment; the new creation existing side by side, in and amongst, the old, and that without loss of natural bias; "for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Moreover, the development of the Consecrated Life is gradual, that is to say its attainment is not to be achieved by one act at once. Its fulness is reached by growth, as slowly the man of God is perfected, "throughly furnished unto all good works." "It is a life of advance, a life of inner yearnings, purified, strengthened, steadied powers from God. It is a life going on towards an object, to the complete fruition of which it is intended to attain at last."

Therefore we may confidently anticipate the manifestation of two phenomena. There will be first the presentation of difficulties to the attainment of consecration, resulting from the opposition of natural forces to supernatural life—that is to say, from environment; and there will be further the provision of supernatural means whereby that life may be supported notwithstanding such

opposition—that is to say Divine Grace. "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength."

It is the nature of these difficulties and supports that must form the subject of our final thoughts upon the Consecrated Life. And as they will be found to affect respectively each side of the dual nature of that life, it will be convenient in their consideration to adopt a similar classification, and to treat of such difficulties as beset, and of such supports as are afforded to consecration, first as arising from within—upon the devotional side; and secondly, as springing from without—upon the side of active service.

I. DIFFICULTIES AND SUPPORTS OF THE DEVOTIONAL LIFE.

The main difficulties in the way of the preservation of devotion would seem to be twofold, and to be relatively met in the abounding love of the Father by a corresponding stay.

(i.) *There is the difficulty of failure.* It is the difficulty of sin: one which is caused by our own frequent relapses. Nothing is more antagonistic to advance in the spiritual life than the collapse of high resolve, or the gratification of self-will, or the return to the low ideals of the world. And nothing is more inimical to devotion; for nothing more bedraggles the pinions of the soul, which would fain soar into heavenly places, than the oppressiveness of sin in general, and the burden of special sin in particular.

Yet "God is faithful;" and the very fact that, despite the self-created difficulty, the struggle is not altogether abandoned is evidence of the fulfilment of the promise, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." In and through the ministry of reconciliation

> "There is a stay—and we are strong,"

as it affords a gracious means whereby to hold

> "with him who sings
> To one clear harp in divers tones,
> That men may rise on stepping-stones,
> Of their dead selves to higher things."

as in the sacrament of Absolution the soft breath of Divine forgiveness applies the cleansing Blood, which "taketh away the sin of the world," and restores to the perturbed soul the peace of devotion which "in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength."

(ii.) *There is the difficulty of despondency.* This is the difficulty of weariness, and is born of a want of power for the effort both to will and to do of God's good pleasure. Nothing is more depressing than the knowledge, which we cannot elude, that after all we are not what we fain would be, that we are not what we might have been, nor even what we seem. Nothing is more numbing to the spiritual life than the certain reaction which sets in, and recurs again and again, when the first enthusiasm of consecration has subsided, when devotion grows cold and weak before the endless questionings and special pleadings of human weariness. Nor is it easily possible to encounter a greater danger than that, than which nothing is more likely to ensue, of an attempt at false compromise between God and

Mammon, or of a feeble, flickering struggle to make the best of both worlds. And all this, with the pain of its harassment, constitutes a difficulty which is universal, because it has its roots in the weakness of human will and human power. Nor is the pain minimised by the consciousness that consecration is a life-long matter. Were it but momentary, an evanescent emotion might suffice for its accomplishment; or terminable, we might brace ourselves for its attainment, even though the maintenance of effort were impossible; it is the view down a possibly long vista of years, closed only by the eternal change, that gives to despondency an unutterably additional intensity.

But side by side with the admitted difficulty stands revealed an equivalent support. Tired and wearied, the soul, drooping beneath the mists of despondency which hide the sunshine of God, is revived by the whisper of a Voice, telling of accomplishment in toil and of victory in battle. It is a Voice which assures the bestowal of the gift of the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of Energy—in all the plenitude of His seven-fold power, and which indicates the communication of Divine aid through the strengthening Presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament of His Body and Blood. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."

"Well I know thy trouble,
O My servant true;
Thou art very weary,—
I was weary too;

But that toil shall make thee
Some day all Mine own,
And the end of sorrow
Shall be near My Throne."

"*In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.*"

II. DIFFICULTIES AND SUPPORTS OF ACTIVE SERVICE.

The difficulties which arise with regard to the performance of the active service of consecration originate mainly from without, and, like those referred to as touching the devotional life may, with the provision made to meet them, be similarly classified under two heads.

(i.) *There is the difficulty of interruption.* It is a very real difficulty, the more so as it is one against which it is impossible to adopt preventive measures. How often it happens that the best laid plans for the furtherance of the knowledge of the everlasting Gospel are frustrated by circumstances quite beyond the control of those by whom such plans are initiated. Others fail to see in the same light as ourselves the importance of whatever work we have in hand. It is characteristic of us all that the interests of that in which we are personally engaged loom largest on our horizon; hence the interposition by others of their own interests and schemes is unhesitatingly effected by them with little thought of, and less regret for, the inconvenience and hindrance which may thereby be caused, to work upon which their own hearts are not equally set. And the consequence is inevitable. The interruption, from whatever source it arise, is calculated to paralyse energy, as it renders nugatory much past labour (accomplished, it may be, at no small cost),

and makes necessary the devotion of much future time to the drawing of new plans and to the building of fresh scaffolding for the erection of the edifice desired.

A support is, however, provided for such moments of trial which is, beyond all question, the revelation contained in the great fact of the Incarnation. That was no mere act once and for all complete in its effects, and then over and done with so far as it affected creation. Its results are patent still, as, permeating and sublimating all human life, it manifests the presence of Christ in the whole world of men, lifting their affairs to the level of the Father's business, and showing the furtherance of the immediate interests of mankind at large, however and whenever exposed to view, to be one object of the active service required of those whose lives are dedicated to the service of God. If

> "Thou cam'st not to thy place by accident,
> It is the very place God meant for thee,"

it must be true that the interruptions, erewhile found a difficulty, are in reality just one great evidence of Divine guidance, as they constitute a means whereby God regulates the arrangements by which our parts are to be played in His great design. Let interruption be regarded as the providential correction of the mistakes due to the ignorance or thoughtlessness of the servant, and they become welcome as the support which the Father's love affords to His children's weakness.

> "Take it on trust a little while;
> Soon shalt thou read the mystery right
> In the full sunshine of His smile."

(ii.) *There is the difficulty of Temptation.* And this is, again, a difficulty which no human power can prevent. It is caused by the powers of evil taking advantage of man's inherent weakness to prompt neglect of service, or half-heartedness in its performance, when the Divine will is found to involve positive loss or actual pain. Nor can it be ignored; for the weakness is so absolute, and man's determination, at its best, so lukewarm. Yet it is one thing to be tempted and another thing to fall; and the support assured against this supreme difficulty is nothing else than that strength of God, the fulness of which is only manifested in the extremity of human weakness. Though the force of the world, the flesh and the devil be realised in all its potency—the messenger of Satan to buffet us—yet is its perception but the occasion for the use of the Divine strength; and temptation is transformed into opportunity as the truth of the wondrous assertion is appreciated, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."

> "What though an untried path we tread?
> God's faithfulness is overhead.
> What though the shadows round us play?
> God's benediction lines the way."

"*In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.*"

Such is the Consecrated Life, a life of devotion and of active service, beset by difficulties, surcharged with

strength Divine. To us the call to lead it sounds this Lenten-tide, as before us gleams the Easter hope of newness of spiritual existence, vouched for by the power of Christ's Resurrection.

"Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?" Who, gladly and with deepest meaning, to breathe out the spirit of the prayer of dedication "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven"? Who to learn the secret of devotion and by "giving all diligence, add to your faith . . . knowledge"? Who to turn that knowledge to fullest account in imitation of Him "Who went about doing good, . . . for God was with Him"? Who to see in the Master's question his own ambition, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" and to find support under every difficulty which he shall encounter as "in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength"?

His participation in the great Festival of the Risen Life shall indeed be full of joy as, in utter self-dedication to the will of God (a dedication animated and to be completed by the operation of the Eternal Spirit) he rises from the Altar on Easter Morning to walk thenceforward in newness of life, looking onward to the glorious consummation promised as encouragement to enduring service, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life"—a consummation to be reached when the waters of human life shall be merged at last in the source from which they sprang,

> "When that which drew from out the boundless deep
> Turns again home."

ADDRESSES ON

The Consecrated Life,

BASED UPON

THE SEVEN WORDS FROM THE CROSS.

BRIEF MEDITATIONS FOR THE DEVOTION OF

The Three Hours' Agony,

TOGETHER WITH SUGGESTIONS FOR PRIVATE PRAYER.

INTRODUCTORY.

THE sufferings and sacrifice of our Blessed Lord, undertaken "for us men, and for our salvation," were wholly voluntary. It is indeed "appointed unto men once to die;" nevertheless, by reason of His Divine Nature, the Person of the Christ had been freed from the common liability had He chosen to exercise the powers of His Godhead. But inasmuch as, this notwithstanding, He yielded

> "His life when His will to keep or to lose it was free,
> Choosing to suffer man's sorrows, choosing man's burden to bear,
> Tempted as they are tempted, tasting their doubt and despair,"

His sacrifice constituted an act of voluntary self-surrender, and thereby presents a perfect example of the Consecrated Life.

As it was, of course, upon the Cross that that sacrifice reached its climax, so in the utterances of that supreme moment of consecration we naturally expect to find some thoughts which will be helpful to ourselves. Nor are we disappointed. For listening as

> "Seven times He spake, seven Words of love,"

we do catch revelations of the mind and will of God as, from the pulpit of the Cross, the Master teaches, consoles, and exhorts His followers for all time.

As we listen to Him to-day our object will be two-fold. First, out of the many thoughts suggested by the seven utterances of our Blessed Lord we shall endeavour to select and to elucidate, from each successive Word, but a single idea, bearing upon the Consecrated Life. And secondly we shall seek to indicate certain lines as to the direction appropriate for the private prayers that form so large an element in the devotion of the Three Hours' Agony.

Nor dare we venture within the luminous darkness of the last awful scenes in the Passion of Christ without seeking for that guidance and strength wherein alone can be found the power and the will both to learn and to obey any revelation which shall there be vouchsafed to us of the mind and will of God.

"O God, forasmuch as without Thee we are not able to please Thee; mercifully grant, that Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

THE FIRST WORD.

S. Luke xxiii. 34.

"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

THE CRY OF CONSECRATION.

THE scene and its accessories indicate the concentration of woe. The physical pain inflicted on the Man of Sorrows, linked to the moral degradation imposed upon the pure Spirit of the spotless Christ, and accentuated by the social desertion of the Founder of a Kingdom, constitute a point in human suffering awful in its keenness.

But through it all, from first to last, from the agony of Gethsemane to the expiry on Golgotha, one thought sustained the Sufferer, one cry rose high above the babble of hatred, contempt and misery which found expression in that moment of the world's redemption when, by the obedience of the Second Adam, the evil consequence of the disobedience of the first was to be disannulled in Christ's great act of atoning love. The sustaining thought was that of the Fatherhood of God; the cry that of Consecration—"Father."

The full meaning of that sustaining thought to the mind of the perfect Humanity of Christ is not always recognised. It is a conception too often obscured by

our own self-imposed limitations. It should, however, never be forgotten that the idea of Divine Fatherhood is, in reality, that of Divine Parentage. To speak of the Motherhood of God were to use a term possibly as unsatisfactory as unconventional; but to miss the truth that God, comprehending every possible good, combines all qualities which characterise Parentage (as for example the strength of a father with the tenderness of a mother), is to miss too the full measure of heavenly love and with it to lose much corresponding confidence, peace and rest.

The sustaining power of trust in the Father's ceaseless watchfulness and in the Father's unfalterable love; the joy of relying upon His over-ruling Providence, as we gladly do and bear in the fulfilment of His Will, because He knoweth best; and the satisfaction of loving Him in and through all, in sunshine and gloom, through good report and evil report, with the strong affection of children,—this is a lesson taught in the first utterance from the Cross.

"Father": it is the Cry of Consecration, as it is that which tells of the confidence that renders self-dedication possible, of the protection which ensures its sweetness and of the love which accounts it less a sacrifice than a service.

"He knoweth all the pathway we must travel,
Its ins and outs along the mountain's brow;
What hopes may speed us and what things retard us,
What clouds may gather—yes, He knoweth now.

He knoweth where our weary steps may stumble,
And where our tired hearts may be dismayed;
Where careless walking may bring pain or peril,
He knoweth, and we will not be afraid.

Afraid? How could we be, with such a Father?
So strong, so loving and so good to all;
Who heareth the most feeble cry for succour,
Who raiseth very gently those who fall.

And not the future only knows our Father,
But all the present and the past as well;
Those places where we lost the conscious Presence
Of Him Who comes within our hearts to dwell.

He knoweth all and yet He loves us still,
And still is willing now to be our Guide;
O let us each then walk more humbly
And keep and cling more closely to His Side."

* * * *

From these considerations there flows naturally the perception of two points upon which to fix devotion. Ours must be the prayer for simple, childlike trust in the Fatherhood of God, coupled with a petition for the grace of filial obedience. It will be the heart's utterance of the Cry of Consecration.

THE SECOND WORD.

S. Luke xxiii. 43.

"Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise."

THE REPOSE OF CONSECRATION.

AMIDST the stern sufferings of the Cross the gentle Heart of Jesus was touched by an agony which, though far less keen than His own, was sadly intense to him who endured it. Out of His tender solicitude for the peace of others sprang the utterance of His second dying Word, which contains the assurance of the Repose of Consecration.

> "When the toil is over,
> Then comes rest and peace;"

the world: its conflicts, its sorrows, its unrest; and then—the Paradise of God.

Men often wonder that so little of the joy of Paradise has been revealed. Human judgment might suppose that the brilliancy of the prospect would lend encouragement and animation to hopeful perseverance. Yet Divine wisdom has lifted but a corner of the dark curtain that hides it from our gaze. Perchance it is that He Who "knoweth our frame" and remembereth whereof we are made, Who measures so accurately our

tendency to turn away from the unattractive forms of duty and to allow the lust of the eye and the pride of life to intervene between ourselves and its accomplishment, foresaw that the vision would be too engrossing for lives dedicated to active service. Yet even so, we know enough to make most welcome the comforting assurance of so sweet a future.

The thought of the first awakening of the penitent robber in the Paradise of God may well be too overwhelming in its pathos for our contemplation; yet the recognition of his joy in repose, when the stress of life, and the agony of the supreme moment of death were over, is full of comfort for the Consecrated Life. Repose, which is not the inactivity of idleness but the freedom of opportunity in the absence of hindrance; repose, which is security from the pursuit of temptation; repose, which is the quieting of aching voids by severed friendships knitted up and by the enlightenment of the understanding under the beams of light perpetual: this is a thought replete with happiness, and it is the sustaining thought of Paradise.

Yet, too, even this side the grave, there reach us some gleams of radiance from the fair fields beyond. The "to-day" of the Saviour repeats itself to the alleviation of the sorrows of the Consecrated Life, as it brings repose with the calm assurance of every uttered absolution. "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Paradise in the future—aye, and Paradise, too, in the present: this is the second revelation of the Cross,

a revelation which constitutes the very Repose of Consecration.

"While I do my duty,
Struggling through the tide,
Whisper Thou of beauty
On the other side!"

* * * *

There can be no hesitation in the selection of topics around which private devotion may centre when the heart is filled with the longing aroused by the thought of Paradise. For ourselves we must surely ask to enjoy, here and now, the growth which is characteristic of Christian repose, as well as petition for the blessing of a quiet conscience and (both here and hereafter) for "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding." Nor at such a moment may we forget those who have already entered within the veil,—our dear ones who have gone before,—the Church of Christ Expectant.

May they rest in peace.
And may light perpetual shine upon them.

THE THIRD WORD.

S. JOHN XIX. 26, 27.

"Woman, behold thy son!" . . . . "Behold thy mother!"

THE COMPANIONSHIP OF CONSECRATION.

THERE is no more important consideration with regard to the surroundings of consecration than that involved in the responsibility of companionship. For it is the responsibility of influence and is indicated here in the beatitude pronounced by our Blessed Lord upon duties fulfilled to family and to friend.

"'Tis love, 'tis love that makes the world go round,"

and in the Consecrated Life it is the mutual love of parent and child which shows forth the relationship of God to humanity; it is that of husband and wife which depicts the union between Christ and His Church; it is that of friend with friend which illustrates the companionship of the communion of the saints; and it is that of the home which reveals the family life of the Church of God.

"Here, in earth's home, preparing
For the bright Home above;
And there, for ever sharing
Its joy, where 'God is Love!'"

The cynic may ask in his bitterness "what is friendship but a name?" or pronounce love to be "still an emptier sound;" but he who learns on Calvary the lessons of his life will find in the thoughtfulness of the dying Saviour for His mother and for His beloved disciple a purer teaching and a nobler example. He will realise that the true foundation for companionship, as well as the touchstone of its merit, is love which, in the Sacrifice of the Cross, reached its supreme manifestation. Thus the privileges of companionship in the Consecrated Life become very real to him and the corresponding responsibility of influence is quickened by the magnetism of the Cross. He perceives that He neither is, nor can live, solitary in the Kingdom of his Lord, a Kingdom teeming with interests beneath which the hearts of men palpitate responsive to the slightest touch. He recognises that being a member of a vast and powerful organisation he, on the one hand, catches something of its mighty enthusiasm whilst, on the other hand, there is demanded from him a contribution of individual fervour. He understands therefore that his own example and his every action must have a lasting effect upon the body corporate and that the influence which he cannot but wield must, in consequence, be so directed as to further the highest interests of the common weal. This recognition will glorify the relationships of his home life, it will sanctify those of his friendships and it will irradiate with a not less than celestial light the slightest intercourse of his business hours.

"Members one of another": that is surely the third

lesson taught from the Cross and it is that of the Companionship of Consecration.

"Yes, pray for whom thou lovest, if uncounted wealth were thine,
The treasures of the boundless deep, the riches of the mine:
Thou couldst not to thy cherished friends, a gift so dear impart,
As the earnest benediction, of a deeply-loving heart."

* * * *

And as we pray how best shall our petitions find expression? Assuredly in an appeal for the regeneration of society; for grace to bear our share in that great work; for wisdom and disposition to use our influence aright; for deepened powers of sympathy; and for the unity of the Body of Christ. "That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us."

THE FOURTH WORD.

S. MATTHEW XXVII. 46.

"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

THE COST OF CONSECRATION.

"HE was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." That is the meaning of this "exceeding bitter cry" of the dying Saviour, a cry which reveals to our sadly unappreciative conception the Cost of Consecration. For in it is manifested the Substitution of Christ.

The utterance of the fourth Word marks indeed the central point of the Passion; after it is reached little remains to be done but for the Divine Speaker to pass into His last sleep. The Sacrifice of Obedience can no further go when the one Sinless Man has voluntarily accepted the sin-burden of the whole world.

No human thought can sound the depth, or measure the full significance of that awful Agony. He Who from eternity was God and with God, "the brightness of His glory," now lost the conscious presence

of the Father's Face as "His own Self bare our sins in His own Body on the tree." Yet from it all stands out the one thought of vicarious suffering, the Substitution of Christ. "The wages of sin is death."

> "That bitter cup—love drank it up;
> Now blessings' draught for me."

"For He hath made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

Because He has rendered, in all His sinless spotlessness the sacrifice of a perfected obedience, the spectacle has been presented before God, Who is "of purer eyes than to behold evil," of humanity restored to the position which it occupied before the fall. And the scope of that restoration is unlimited in its possibilities. It is a restoration won for all mankind. "By grace ye are saved." "Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him," the "paradox of the exchanged personalities" is completed, and the fourth lesson from the Cross is learned, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

* * * * *

And so let us pray: pleading with the Holy Spirit for conviction of sin; for penitence and for faith in Christ's Atoning Sacrifice; and for His operation both to assure and to maintain our union with Christ and the continued realisation of the Divine Presence.

THE FIFTH WORD.

S. John xix. 28.

"I thirst."

THE SUFFERINGS OF CONSECRATION.

THIS is the one expression of personal, physical suffering which escaped the dying Saviour's Lips. But, though it stand alone, it is sufficient to remind us that the limitation by which the servant is bound is one from which the Master claimed no exemption. "We must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God."

For the path of consecration is the path of suffering, and the fact is one never to be disguised. Whilst no one is, or can be, so genuinely happy as he who follows that path, it is quite likely that those who turn from it may derive more passing pleasure from the world and the things of the world, and may escape many painful experiences and sordid deprivations. It were foolish to hide the fact that the Consecrated Life involves suffering. For the essence of consecration is the sacrifice of will, and such a sacrifice is naturally distasteful even when it be readily offered. Self-denial is no easy duty, self-examination and confession are humiliating and distressful, devotion is often wearisome, and renunciation

of the world unpleasant; but if crucifixion with Christ be to be a reality all these must be gladly accepted and patiently endured.

And it is worth while. For the discipline of suffering is God's perfecting process for His people—though, indeed, it be hard at times to understand the mystery of its working. Yet who that knows anything of the influence of Christ in the world to-day but knows, too, that to the intensity of His sympathy that influence is largely due? And whence, but through the discipline of suffering, can the power of sympathy be won? So, in like manner, if one element in the Consecrated Life be that of active service amongst and for our brethren which are in the world, how far from full accomplishment would he be in whom, because suffering were unendured, the force of sympathy were lacking? Or even looking forward to the future,

> "How wilt thou then look back, and smile
> On thoughts that bitterest seem'd erewhile;
> And bless the pangs that made thee see,
> This was no world of rest for thee!"

For who, that is conscious that with God there can be no waste, dare affirm that in the service of "the land that is very far off" there may not be much to be done that will be possible only to those who have learned the secret of endurance, as, kneeling before the Crucified and listening to the teaching of the fifth Word from the Cross, they have mastered the lesson of perfection through suffering?

"I sat in the school of sorrow
The Master was teaching there;
But my eyes were dim with weeping,
And my heart was full of care.

Instead of looking upward,
And seeing His Face Divine,
So full of the tenderest pity,
For weary hearts like mine,—

I only thought of the burden,
The cross that before me lay;
So hard, and heavy to carry,
That it darken'd the light of day.

So I could not learn my lesson,
And say, 'Thy will be done!'
And the Master came not near me,
As the weary hours went on.

At last, in my heavy sorrow,
I look'd from the cross, above;
And I saw the Master watching,
With a glance of tender love.

He turn'd to the cross before me,
And I thought I heard Him say,—
'My child, thou must bear thy burden,
And learn thy task to-day.

'I may not tell the reason,
'Tis enough for thee to know
That I, the Master, am teaching,
And give this cup of woe.'

So I stoop'd to that weary sorrow;
One look at that Face Divine
Had given me power to trust Him,
And say, 'Thy will, not mine.'

And thus I learnt my lesson,
Taught by the Master alone;
He only knows the tears I shed,
For He has wept His own.

But from them came a brightness,
Straight from the Home above,
Where the school life will be ended,
And the cross will show the love."

* * * *

What, then, shall be our prayer? For grace to sorrow with Him that so we may share His perfection; for patience in tribulation and for deeper love to the Cross; and that we "may know Him, . . . and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death."

THE SIXTH WORD.

S. John xix. 30.

"It is finished."

THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF CONSECRATION.

THE sixth Word: it is the Worker's sigh of satisfaction at the attainment of purpose; the long-drawn breath which tells that "sweet is rest when toil is done." But it is more than this; it is *the* word of encouragement for the Consecrated Life. There it stands for all time, the prophecy of the dying Christ as to the accomplishment of service. "It is finished." Not indeed His work for humanity; never, never can that be finished so long as in eternity there lives a soul with capacity for happiness in the sunshine of His Presence. But finished the work He had come to do, the hard, heavy work of the long, weary years of utter self-dedication to the Father's Will.

Before those who follow Him there stretches a fearsome future, mysterious in its uncertainties, arduous in its difficulties, threatening in its sufferings. And facing that future the heart dies down beneath the consciousness of the weakness of human will and human power.

"Does the road wind uphill all the way?
Yes, to the very end."

"Who is sufficient for these things?" is the cry which bursts from the lips of those upon whom the burden of service rests. Yet there it stands, the witness of the Son of Man to the final accomplishment of the service of the Consecrated Life. "It is finished." Let only the consecration be full and real; and then, because it is a consecration to God and by God, success is an absolute certainty, though it be reached only in God's Own time and in God's Own way.

"God has conceded two sights to a man—
One, of men's whole work, time's completed plan,
The other, of the minute's work, man's first
Step to the plan's completeness."

* * * *

And as we kneel before His Cross we point our prayers in two directions. First, looking backward to the past,

"Lord, we would bring our burden
Of sinful thought and deed,
In Thy pure Presence kneeling
From bondage to be freed.
Our hearts' most bitter sorrow
For all our work undone,
So many talents wasted,
So few true conquests won."

And secondly, looking forward to the future,

"Oh God, our Help in ages past,
Our Hope for years to come,
Be Thou our Guard while troubles last,
And our eternal Home."

THE SEVENTH WORD.

S. Luke xxiii. 46.

"Father, into Thy Hands I commend My Spirit."

THE CONFIDENCE OF CONSECRATION.

IT is the last Word, for the dear Voice of the Divine Preacher is soon to be hushed in death. The end is reached, and our great Example having, from the pulpit of His Cross, revealed the capabilities of the Consecrated Life, now finally teaches us how to die; so far as to die is possible for those whose lives are hid with Him in God. And His closing lesson is but a repetition of His earliest, as it is a return to first principles. The cry which ushered into being the Consecrated Life as

> "An infant crying in the night:
> An infant crying for the light:
> And with no language but a cry;"

and the cry which, when that life has run its course on earth, is wrung out by the rending asunder, until the Resurrection Morning, of soul and body, are one and the same—"Father."

However and whenever it be met death cannot but have its mysteries, as it is to each an unique experience;

its solemnities, as its mistakes admit of no rectification; its terrors, on account of its intense loneliness. However long it be anticipated and however careful be the preparation made for it, death must still possess a certain inherent horror, as it is foreign to God's contemplation of the plan of His creation. In order to face it with an assurance which shall support the soul through all, still more to look forward to it "with an intense and reverent curiosity," the Confidence of Consecration is the one thing needful, and the inspiration of that confidence is contained in its initial cry "Father." For it is the cry which, telling of union with Christ, speaks too of "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." It is a cry therefore which, transforming the name of the dark angel Death into that of a Messenger of Heaven, proclaims that

> "There is no death. The stars go down
> To rise upon some fairer shore;
> And bright in heaven's jewelled crown
> They shine for evermore."

"Father, into Thy Hands I commend My Spirit." That is the hope born of heaven-taught confidence. Nor is it misplaced. For the answer comes back, strong in the might of the Father's plighted word, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour."

"Death is not death, if it raises us from darkness

into light, from weakness into strength, from sinfulness into holiness. Death is not death, if it brings us nearer to Christ, Who is the fount of life. Death is not death if it perfects our faith by sight, and lets us behold Him in Whom we have believed. Death is not death, if it gives to us those whom we have loved and lost, for whom we have lived, for whom we long to live again. Death is not death, if it rids us of doubt and fear, of chance and change, of space and time, and all which space and time bring forth, and then destroy. Death is not death; for Christ has conquered death, for Himself, and for those who trust in Him."

* * * * *

So then will we look onward, not to death, but "through the grave, and gate of death" to the consummation of the Consecrated Life, praying as we bow before the awful deathbed upon which the Son of Man has "perfected for ever them that are sanctified," first that we may realise the uncertainty of life and the certainty of death *for ourselves*, secondly for the grace of a life-long preparation, and lastly for a good and unclouded death and for a bright continuance, from "this beginning," of the Consecrated Life in the gladness of the world beyond.

"THOU KNOWEST, LORD, THE SECRETS OF OUR HEARTS; SHUT NOT THY MERCIFUL EARS TO OUR PRAYER; BUT SPARE US, LORD MOST HOLY, O GOD MOST MIGHTY, O HOLY AND MERCIFUL SAVIOUR, THOU MOST WORTHY JUDGE ETERNAL, SUFFER US NOT, AT OUR LAST HOUR, FOR ANY PAINS OF DEATH, TO FALL FROM THEE."

And so our blessed task is done. We have listened eagerly for the Master's teaching on the Consecrated Life, and, as we have listened, He has, at the supreme moment of the climax of His own consecration revealed to us the completeness of that life in the lessons of His seven dying Words of Love.

Still clinging closely to Him, from Whom we can bear to be severed, no, not for a moment, we kneel once more before the Altar of the Cross, bearing now its awful Offering of the world's great Sacrifice. And, broken-hearted in the presence of Christ's oblation of Himself we, as athwart the black clouds of Good Friday the light of Easter Dawn begins to fall, sob out afresh our determination to consecration in the realisation of the power of His Risen Life, as the Spirit of His Father and our Father breathes into our souls the sweet message of consolation, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

"O love surpassing thought,
So bright, so grand, so clear, so true, so glorious,
Love infinite, love tender, love unsought,
Love changeless, love rejoicing, love victorious!
And this great love for us in boundless store:
God's everlasting love! What would we more?"

"ALMIGHTY GOD, WHO HAST GIVEN THINE ONLY SON TO BE UNTO US BOTH A SACRIFICE FOR SIN, AND ALSO AN ENSAMPLE OF GODLY LIFE; GIVE US GRACE THAT WE MAY ALWAYS MOST THANKFULLY RECEIVE THAT HIS INESTIMABLE BENEFIT, AND ALSO DAILY ENDEAVOUR OURSELVES TO FOLLOW THE BLESSED STEPS OF HIS MOST HOLY LIFE; THROUGH THE SAME JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD. AMEN."

THE END.

NEW YORK
PUBLIC
LIBRARY